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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2029
TAGS: PTER PGOV PREL UK TU
SUBJECT: TURKEY: UK PLEASED WITH COUNTERTERRORISM TALKS --
WITH ONE EXCEPTION

REF: A. ANKARA 87
1B. 08 ANKARA 1939
1C. ANKARA 191

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary. The first high-level UK-Turkey counterterrorism consultation continued the positive trend begun with the January visit of UK Home Secretary, according to UK Embassy sources. The two sides agreed to strengthen police and intelligence cooperation, including on Al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists. Britain offered to send an expert to discuss extradition. The two sides also agreed to explore avenues for cooperation in counter-radicalization. The UK's primary disappointment was Turkey's insistence that its counterterrorism legislation is adequate to the task.
End summary.

12. (C) Turkey and the UK held their first high-level interagency counterterrorism (CT) consultations March 30-31 in Ankara, UK Embassy Global Issues Section Head Maya Sivagnanam told us April 2. Simon Manley, UK FCO Director for Defence and Strategic Threats, led the UK's delegation; he was supported by MOJ Legislative Unit Head David Ford. For Turkey, MFA Deputy Undersecretary Kadri Ecvet Tezcan headed the delegation, although much of the discussion was led by DG for Multilateral and Political Affairs Tomur Bayer and DDG for Security Affairs Inan Ozyildiz. The one-day event opened the evening of March 30 with a reception for academics and journalists hosted by UK Charge Giles Portman. On March 31, the plenary began with non-proliferation issues (led by Bayer), followed counterterrorism (led by Ozyildiz) which constituted the bulk of the discussion, according to Sivagnanam. Deputy U/S Tezcan hosted a small working lunch.

Generally Positive Talks . . .

13. (C) The new CT dialogue built on past momentum (Ref a) and allowed the two countries to raise their dialogue to a more strategic level, Sivagnanam noted. It also provided a useful venue for the UK to explain its newly unveiled national CT strategy, "CONTEST II." Pointing to the "Four P's" of the UK's counterterrorism approach -- Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare, Sivagnanam explained that the UK's work with Turkey focuses on Pursue and Prevent. Turkey has been relatively pleased with recent UK measures against the PKK, she noted. London has frozen several PKK-related bank accounts and, most recently, distributed leaflets in both

Turkish and English in the UK's Kurdish communities inviting people to contact a police hotline with information on PKK extortionists. Turkey was also pleased with the UK's efforts, working closely with EU CT Coordinator Giles DeKerchove, to strengthen EU measures against the PKK.

. . . with One Major Exception

¶4. (C) The "heart" of the CT discussion, however, was a disappointment, Sivagnanam admitted. The UK had hoped for more in-depth discussion on Turkey's CT legislation, including its definition of "terrorism." The MOJ judge who gave the Turkish presentation insisted Turkey "has no problem" because it can handle any contingency either through national law or through one of the 13 UN CT conventions to which it is a party. The British delegation felt this MOJ dismissal of UK concerns was a "step back" from earlier discussions with their Home Secretary. Sivagnanam hastened to add that Turkey's MFA seemed somewhat more interested and flexible on the issue than MOJ.

¶5. (C) Despite the lack of progress on Turkey's CT legislation, the UK delegation felt the talks served their purpose and was pleased with the outcome. Both sides agreed to the importance of strengthened international CT cooperation and agreed, in principle, to meet again in six months. The UK flagged the need for greater bilateral cooperation, including reinvigorating airport security training for TNP, which had slid, and new crisis management programs. The two sides also discussed possible UK assistance to Turkey on its proposed new CT structure (Ref b, c). Deputy U/S Tezcan showed initial interest in the UK's

Joint Terrorism Analysis Center (JTAC), but when he learned it consisted "only" of mid-level interagency personnel, he remarked "I'm not sure it would work here." He was clearly interested in a high-level model of interagency cooperation/collaboration, Sivagnanam observed.

Turkey's Complaints: No New News

¶6. (C) Turkey briefed on its own CT strategy, including how it was encouraging former militants to reenter society, Sivagnanam reported. While Turkey expressed general satisfaction with recent UK actions, it had several specific complaints. First it noted public support by several British Members of Parliament for certain "objectionable" Kurdish groups. It also complained about celebrations of the Kurdish New Year (Newruz) in Trafalgar Square that included pro-PKK propaganda. On both issues, the UK responded that freedom of speech allowed such expressions. The Turks also brought up several long-standing requests for extradition to Turkey of accused PKK members resident in Britain. The UK repeated past explanations that the evidence provided to date by the Turkish government did not meet UK legal requirements. Tezcan appeared to understand the situation, and responded that he simply wanted the British to "rigorously enforce UK law."

Moving Forward

¶7. (C) On the "Pursue" side of the ledger, both sides agreed to enhance their "already good" police and intelligence cooperation (partly through the Bosphorus Group). Britain is particularly interested in obtaining more information from Turkey on third-country nationals (including those transiting Turkey en route to and from the Afghanistan/Pakistan region) and Turkish extremists residing in other countries. Turkey said it is willing to cooperate not just on the PKK, but also on Al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists. Separately, the UK offered to send representatives of the Crown Prosecution Service to Turkey to work with Turkey's prosecutors on extradition issues. On the "Prevent" side, the UK gingerly raised several possible counter-radicalization initiatives for consideration. Acknowledging their sensitivity, Sivagnanam described possible inclusion of British Islamic scholars in Turkey's current project to revise the Haddith for modern times.

Comment

¶ 8. (C) With the exception of UK disappointment over Turkey's position on its terrorism legislation, the UK is satisfied with the direction and pace of counterterrorism cooperation. Separately, the UK Embassy expressed interest in identifying areas where our two embassies might work together with Turkey and other regional partners on counterterrorism initiatives. We will pursue this opening.

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Jeffrey